Cystic fibrosis (CF) makes the body produce thick, sticky mucus in the lungs, pancreas, and other organs. This mucus makes it very difficult for people with CF to breathe and leads to life-threatening infections. Because of the thick mucus that builds up in their lungs, germs can thrive and multiply, putting people with CF at higher risk of getting infections, and making it harder for them to recover.

Not only are people with CF more susceptible to infection, medical studies show that people with CF can spread or get particularly dangerous germs from each other. This is known as "cross-infection" and depending on the situation, can lead to worsening symptoms, decline in lung function, and even death.

The Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines (IPC) were created to help people with CF and their care teams lower the risk of spreading germs. The guidelines recommend the following:

**In Every Day Activity**

- **Six-foot rule:** All people with CF, regardless of their respiratory tract culture results, should be separated by at least six feet from other people with CF in all settings, to reduce the risk of transmission of CF pathogens. This does not apply to members of the same household.

- **Events and activities:** The CF Foundation guidelines state that only one person with CF should attend any camp, educational retreat, or CF Foundation-sponsored indoor event. Family members without CF and individuals with CF who live together in the same household may attend these activities. Other organizations have taken a similar approach to in-person events.

- **Hand hygiene:** All health care professionals, people with CF, family members and friends should wash their hands regularly – using alcohol-based hand sanitizer or antimicrobial soap and water when hands could be potentially contaminated with pathogens.

**In Clinic**

- Collaborate to create protocols, checklists and audits to standardize practices.

- Disinfect surfaces before and after they are used by a person with CF.

- Wash your hands with either alcohol-based sanitizer or antimicrobial soap and water before and after entering hospital or clinic rooms, doing procedures like pulmonary function tests (PFTs), and after coughing or touching common items throughout the hospital.

- People with CF should wear a surgical or isolation mask in all common areas of the hospital, such as hallways, elevators, and waiting rooms.

- Help people with CF keep a safe 6-foot distance in all settings.
All health care professionals caring for CF patients should wear gowns and gloves regardless of the hospital setting.

- Wear a mask and eye protection in special circumstances, per CDC guidelines.
- Reduce risk from pathogens during pulmonary function testing (PFTs)
- Use one room for each person with CF.
- Evaluate patient activity case by case before advising a person about participating in activities outside of a hospital room.
- Cover your cough and clean your hands afterwards.
- Clean and disinfect nebulizers.
- Get vaccinated.

Keep In Mind...

**Germs are everywhere, and they can spread** as far as 6 feet when someone coughs or sneezes. Germs can spread from one person to another through direct contact when people shake hands, hug, or kiss. Germs can also spread through indirect contact if people touch something with germs already on it, like a doorknob, or by sharing things like cups or pens.

**Since people with CF are more susceptible to infection**, physical proximity to others with this disease puts them at greater risk of getting and spreading these germs in a way that wouldn’t impact a person without CF. That’s why it’s important for people with CF to stay at least 6 feet away from others with CF and anyone with a cold, flu, or infection.

**Even people with CF who have undergone a lung transplant** still can get and spread dangerous germs among others with CF because these germs can remain in their upper respiratory systems, including the sinuses. Because of the risk of cross-infection, it is recommended that people with CF take the same precautions they took before they had a lung transplant.

Additional Resources

- [IPC Guidelines](#)
- [Germs and Staying Healthy](#)
- [Germs and CF: The Facts (PDF handout)](#)
- [8 Ways to Guard Against Germs in Everyday Life](#)
- [Share With Those Who Care Animation](#)
- [Get Germ Smart Animation](#)
- [Lung Transplantation](#)